

discussion material for bonim and noar

# ASSIMILATION ON THE LEFT

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## JEWISH SOCIALISTS

How did the Jewish radical and socialist regard the Jewish problem?

"The Jewish Socialists of Western Europe unfortunately inherited the traditions of the assimilationists and displayed the same lack of self-respect found in the Jewish bourgeoisie, with the only difference that with the former the moral degeneration was revealed more sharply. To the Jewish Socialists, Socialism meant, first of all, the discard of Jewishness, just as the liberalism of the Jewish bourgeoisie led to assimilation. And yet, this tendency to deny their Jewishness was unnecessary, being prompted by neither Socialism nor liberalism. It was a product of the general degeneration and demoralization of the Jews.

"Impelled by their Judaism towards the path of revolution, the Socialists erred in that they did not guard the purity of their revolt. Instead of emphasizing, in their revolutionary opposition to the class society, their kinship with the most suppressed people of the world, and designating their protest in the first place as specifically Jewish, and later raising it to a higher, universal out-cry, they acted contrariwise. What is more, they robbed the protest of its Jewish character. They suppressed all reference to their Jewish origin, and thus became merely another type of Jewish assimilationists.

"The assimilated bourgeoisie turned away from Judaism. They denied Jewish nationalism because the Jewish people was weak and its conditions unbearable. Jewish Socialists turned away from Judaism, because for them Socialism was not the result of a moral protest against the world of oppressors, but a haven for the Jew whom the liberalism had betrayed. Jewish assimilation clothed itself in the mantle of vicarious nationalism, of patriotic fervor for those lands in which Jews resided; Jewish Socialism used internationalism as a cape to cover its nakedness. This negative and honorless attitude towards its Jewish origin was just as little justified by the truth of internationalism as by the illusion of foreign nationalism." (Syrkin)

The Jewish intelligentsia of Western Europe saw the only road to salvation in the newly-formed Socialist movement. Their bitterness against the rule of exploitation and subjugation--a feeling which stemmed from the basic moral attitudes of the suppressed Jewish people--hurled them

into the socialist movement. Themselves of bourgeois origin, these Jewish Socialists went even further than their predecessors. While the bourgeoisie denied Judaism for economic and social reasons, the socialists, motivated by cosmopolitanism, denied their Judaism in order to avoid facing the deep-rooted prejudices of the non-Jewish working masses.

There was yet another similarity between the beginning of the bourgeois assimilation and that of the Jewish Socialists. The ideologists of the bourgeois assimilation rejoiced at the fall of the ghetto and hoped for the fall of all the remaining barriers between peoples and for a golden age of the brotherhood among mankind. From this also flowed the belief of the mission of a scattered Israel to be the carrier of the mission of a Hebrew humanism among the nations. (Only with the growth and strengthening of the nationalist movements in Europe, was there also a turning among these ideologists toward a local patriotism for the Germans, French, etc.)

The Socialist movement, at its very inception, identified itself with the cosmopolitan ideals. Karl Marx, as is known, never took pride in his Germanism. Marx himself was a fusion of many cultural streams--Jewish, German, French, and English. In this respect he was a perfect cosmopolitan. He did not attach much importance to the national question; hence it is no wonder that he saw the end of Judaism as a result of capitalistic development. The change of the conditions of production, he believed, would soon make the Jews superfluous, just as their economic function was about to make them unnecessary. (Similarly, Marx thought that the Croats and the Serbs will eventually be swallowed up by the Magyars.)

Marx sentenced the Jews to disappearance because he regarded the Jews not as a people, but as a caste, or a class--a class that had already fulfilled its historical function. In a debate with Bruno Bauer, Marx identified the entire Jewish people, (which in his day consisted primarily of poverty-stricken masses) with a handful of very wealthy Jews. Marx expressed himself in the following words: "What is the secular need of the Jew? Huckstering! What is his secular God? Money! Very well. Emancipation from huckstering and money, and from practical real Judaism would be the real self-emancipation of our epoch. An organization of society which could abolish the fundamental conditions of huckstering, and therefore the possibility of huckstering, would render the Jew impossible. His religious consciousness would be dissolved like a mist in the real, vital air of society."

Anti-Semitism from time immemorial put the responsibility on all the Jews and on Judaism for the deeds of individual Jews. To that psychosis Marx surrendered in his condemnation of Judaism. That Marx should harbor such ideas, despite his critical genius, can only be explained by his complete ignorance of the economic and social position of the Jews, particularly of Eastern Europe. Marx, who considered the Jews and Judaism as an economic category was unable to find in the Jew any positive individual trait. "The emancipation of the Jews" he said, "in its ultimate significance is the emancipation of mankind from Judaism." In other words, the Jew must first kill the Jew within himself in order to be a human being--practical advice for both the assimilationist bourgeoisie and the Jewish Socialist seeking to be integrated within the non-Jewish society. "The Jew," he continues, "has emancipated himself in Jewish fashion, not only by taking to himself financial power but by virtue of the fact that with or without his cooperation money has become a world power and the practical Jewish spirit has become the practical spirit of Christian nations. The Jews have emancipated themselves insofar as Christians have become Jews." 1)

This absurd charge by Marx, who sees in capitalism the image of the Jew, is like that of the modern anti-Semites, that communism is the fruit of the Jewish spirit, or that capitalism is the invention of the Jew.

Marx did not know that in his socialist teachings he was drawing upon the spiritual sources of the ancient

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- 1) It is well to recall that usury and interest were for many centuries a profitable enterprise indulged in by the Catholic Church. This enterprise of the Catholic Church was not required by its canon just as it was not inherent in the Jewish religion.

Max Weber, the famous Christian German sociologist, in his book, "Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft" (Economy and Society) states: "Economically, the money exchange was not created by Jews, but by the Christian merchants. The specific manner in which the medieval forms of law were made to fit rational business aims, as illustrated by the Spanish conquistadores and the English chartered companies, and subsequently the joint stock companies were created independently of Jewish influence. Furthermore, the specific principles of private and public financing to cover budgetary and credit requirements, were created within the matrix of the medieval cities. Later on, these essentially non-Jewish medieval fiduciary forms were incorporated into the financial practices of modern business and the modern state."

Jewish people, that he was advocating only in other words the old ideals of the prophets, yet spitting into the wells from which he drank.

Friedrich Engels, one of Marx's closest friends, saw the Jews in an entirely different light. In a letter dated 1891 to the Austrian Socialist, Pernerstorff, Engels wrote: "The anti-Semites do not even know the Jews whom they scorn. We owe very much to the Jews. Beside Heine and Borne, Marx also was of pure Jewish stock. Lassalle was a Jew. Many of our best people are Jews. My friend, Victor Adler, who is now atoning in a Viennese prison for his devotion to the cause of the proletariat, Eduard Bernstein, editor of the London Social Democrat, all these people whose friendship I am proud to possess, are Jews! I, myself, was labelled by the reactionary clique as a Jew, and, indeed, if I were to choose I would prefer to be a Jew than a 'Herr Von'".

From the tone of his words, it is evident that Engels understood that the Jewishness of these Socialists was not accidentally bound up with the Socialist idea. He also understood that Jewry was more than a fossil tribe, preserved for many centuries by certain economic conditions.

There were not many Socialist leaders of Jewish extraction who presented themselves so openly as Jews, despite Engel's pride in his Jewish friends. Even the prophetic pathos which permeated all their socialist preachings, did not prevent them from making themselves oblivious to the fact that their preachings had specific congenital Jewish traits. They did not differ from all their assimilationist predecessors in Jewish history who, in their desire to escape, turned their backs on their own people, and in some cases even threw stones from across the fence.

Marx and his followers believed that with the passing of historical conditions, which keep the Jews as a segregated ethnic unit, their separateness, too, will disappear. This premise flowed from the indifference of the first socialists to the problem of nationalism. Marxism, as a system of analysis, undoubtedly contributed much to the understanding of many social phenomena and removed from them their mystic shroud. But the orthodox Marxists were enslaved by a materialist fatalism whenever they encountered the Jewish problem. Marx's opinion of the Jews and Judaism was based on the prognosis of capitalist production. Modern technological development, Marx thought, would destroy all old social forms and all barriers between nations and lands. This belief, however, did not prevent Engels from underestimating the significance of Polish independence and from speaking of the "cultural mission" of Germany in the lands of Eastern Europe.

The difference between the Jewish Socialist assimilationists and the liberal assimilationists was that the latter saw the Jewish people entirely holy and based on spirit. The former saw it entirely profane and materialistic. The liberal assimilationists made the Jew into a "homo spiritualis", the socialist assimilationists--into a "homo economicus".

A change in the attitude of the Marxists toward nationalism first occurred at the close of the Nineteenth Century, particularly among the Social Democrats of Austria. For them, the Austrian empire began to show signs of disintegration because of the awakening of the different peoples who lived within the sphere of its domination. It was, therefore, natural that the Austrian Socialists, encountering the national problem within their state, devoted much thought to the national problem as a social phenomenon in general. Karl Renner (better known by his pseudonym, Springe) endeavored to find a solution to the national question in the area of Austria-Hungary, and proposed the creation of a federation of nations based on self-government in all countries around the Danube.

Otto Bauer devoted himself to a more profound elaboration of the same problem of nationalism. His book, "The National Problem and the Social Democracy" which was the product of many years of theoretical inquiry, may be looked upon as a classic of modern socialism. Bauer shows very fine insight in determining the essence of a nation. He is cautious enough to warn against too hasty conclusions "that the levelling of the material contents will also equalize each nation with the other." Bauer acknowledges the necessity of taking account of the nuances distinguishing nations from one another and says: "Self-determination through the nations--that is Socialism." Thus Bauer acknowledges the individual characteristics of nations beyond the external conditions which are subjected to rationalist determination.

"A nation", said Bauer, "may be defined as a 'Charakter-gemeinschaft' (community of character) which is the result not of Schicksals-gleichheit (sameness of fate) but of Shicksals-gemeinschaft (communitiy of fate)" 1) A nation is never only a part of nature, but also a collective culture. A common language is not a prerequisite of national unity. The Danes and the Norwegians, whose languages are similar, constitute two separate nations. Neither is a territory a sufficient pre-requisite for national unity. The history of the Jews, who were preserved as a nation during so many centuries without having a territory of their

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1) It is not similar conditions that create a nation but the community caused by the experiences of a common history.

own, proved the truth of that thesis. The rise of a nation must be looked upon as a process of long duration, as a struggle of mankind with nature. The Marxist method is the key which enables us to understand that phenomenon.

The Jews, Bauer believed, were exceptional in their development, because during many centuries they were representatives of a financial economy in a world of natural economy. They could preserve their cultural collectivity despite the fact that they lived among the various European nations, because they maintained only loose connections with them. Bauer, afraid of sinning against the purely materialistic conception of Marx who looked at the Jews as eternal representatives of Mammon, disregarded the historical fact that the Jews occupied themselves also with crafts and handiwork, and that it was because of the religious factor that they did not join the Christian guilds and fraternities.

Granted that the primitive economy was the only decisive factor which offered the Jews the opportunity for their separatism, there were other factors which proved the contrary. Even after the disappearance of the natural economy, the separateness of the Jews in Europe was continued. If we consider the concentration of the Jewish population in a city like Brooklyn during the period in which there is no "natural economy", we would see that this formula is very far from explaining the national separateness of the Jews.

The expansion of the orbit of economic and social relations may undoubtedly hasten the process of assimilation, and indeed it did so to some extent. But this formula falls short of explaining why the Jews retained their ethnic feeling even after the collapse of the system of natural economy.

Bauer states that the moment Jews and Christians engage as organs of the same system of capitalist production, the resulting social intercourse is bound to affect the specific cultural character of the Jewish group. In this connection, we may profitably turn to the Scottish national movement. "Superficially, Anglo-Scots, to all intents and purposes are indistinguishable from the successive generations of Englishmen with whom they have been brought up, and with whom they associate socially and professionally. Yet they are not Englishmen. There are important involuntary reserves of character, sentiment, emotion, and mentality in which most of them cannot feel as Englishmen even if they would, and there are circumstances in which their basic racial stock emphatically proclaims itself. Two or three generations of English domicile, often make a better imitation Englishman of a German-Jew than of an Anglo-Scot.



Frequently the Anglo-Scot sees and feels things in a dual sense, swaying between the two racial concepts like an Eurasian, one strain dominating the other. The English, among whom the Anglo-Scot lives--the English that is who are his friends, customers, clients, colleagues, fathers, brothers, and sons-in-law--know this better than do the pure Scots of Scotland.\*

In contrast to the mentality of the Scot described above, the Jew has behind him a thousand year old struggle for survival. Far-reaching assimilation was unable to warp the specific ethnic feeling of the Jews. This inability to efface himself was an outstanding characteristic even in modern times, and is evident even in their contributions to the spiritual creations of the nations, among whom they live.

Bauer believed in the omnipotence of the change in economic conditions, but he felt it was not necessary to wait for Socialism before removing the barriers between Jews and non-Jews. He maintained that with the successive development of modern state capitalism, even the Jews in Eastern Europe will cease to be a distinct nation, and that they will be submerged just as in Western Europe. This movement will be furthered through the specific development of the Slav nations in the East. Bauer desired the revival and independence of all peoples, but not of the Jews. He wanted to see them assimilated into the flux of the world. Thus, for example, Bauer not only demanded national independence for the Czechs on their own territory, but even national autonomy for the small Czech groups in Germany. What Bauer was willing to grant the Czech laborer he refused the Jew. He emphasized this point in his book on the Jewish problem: "The German worker wishes the Jewish class comrade all that he wishes the Czech proletarian: higher wages, self-consciousness, capability for the international class struggle." All that, but not national independence or national autonomy for the Jew, because it may prevent the Jewish worker from becoming integrated into the industrial state.

He wanted to discard "the psychology of the Jewish trader of the past and of the passing times." Bauer was not aware that he was paying tribute to the anti-Semitic psychology of the non-Jewish worker, "to the psychology of the past and of the passing times."

To justify the above assertion, Bauer said: "Those who are captivated by the nationalist principle and adhere to traditional national policy, those who see in the preservation of the specific national character the ultimate end of

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\* The Modern Scot, Vol 1, 19



political volition, may find this solution (national fusion) indeed very distressing. To the extent that the modern evolving national policy of the European states demands of the Jews that they relinquish their national culture, so too, it demands that they surrender their specific group character."

Bauer's socialist, nationalist and internationalist aspirations applied to all small and large, free and en-yoked peoples--save his own. He could not free himself from his Selbst-hass. Two souls resided within his breast--the broad-minded enlightened Socialist, and the labor leader in Catholic Austria, who was eager to hide his Jewishness. Unable to fit the Jews into his general scheme, he simply denied them those privileges he granted to others. Bauer was not the only Jewish Socialist to harbor such an attitude toward the Jews. Most of the leaders of the Austrian Social-Democrats who were Jews felt handicapped in their position.

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The Marxist saying--"the social condition determines the social consciousness" aptly befits these socialists of Jewish origin. A few examples will suffice: At the 1928 Brussels Congress of Socialist and Labor International, Eduard Bernstein invited a group of internationally prominent socialists to establish a League for Labor Palestine. Friedrich Adler, the general secretary of the Labor International, protested against that meeting.

Bernstein always distinguished himself by his intellectual courage: from the days of his exile in England, he brought with him many values of English liberal thought. His attitude toward Zionism was a striking contrast to that of the Jewish Austro-Marxists whose unsympathetic attitude was automatically adopted officially by the Austrian Social Democracy. This unfriendliness toward Labor Zionism was manifested at the time when most Socialist parties had officially expressed their sympathy with the Jewish up-building in Palestine, and offered moral and political support. It will suffice to mention such names as Emil Vandervelde, De Brouker, Henderson, Lansbury, Jean Longuet, (the grandson of Karl Marx), Leon Blum and Eugene D  bs. But the official organ of Austrian Social Democracy, Der Kampf, refused to give space for articles on Labor Palestine and Zionism, despite the fact that during the years since the influx of German-Jewish immigrants into Palestine, almost 50% of the readers of this periodical were residing in Palestine.

Again, the May First manifesto, issued by the International in 1939, summarizing the international situation, the conquest of Czechoslovakia, the fall of Spain, etc.,

failed to mention the Arab-Jewish riots in Palestine, or the affliction of the German Jews. The manifesto spoke only vaguely of the fate of refugees. The probable reason for these omissions is that the manifesto was written by Friedrich Adler, the secretary of the International.

But let us return to Otto Bauer. Summing up the problem of Jewish nationality, Bauer reached an impasse. Questioning whether the Jews could become an organic part of the European nations, Bauer was unable to give a final answer. He admitted his inability to state what their fate would be after large-scale intermarriage took place. He now became aware of the limits of science and admitted that only a dilettante boasting of prophetic powers would dare answer that question. Bauer says: "We do not know whether the blood admixture of Jews and Aryans would beget a more, or less gifted race. History shows examples of successful as well as unsuccessful race assimilation. We do not know the hidden law operating behind those cases... Similarly, present science is unable to decide whether the merging of the Jews would be advantageous or disadvantageous not only in cultural partnership, but also in natural partnership."

And so Bauer despite all, regarded Judaism as an historical enigma, and not as a social phenomena which was preserved by specific economic conditions. Only a tragic event shattered Bauer's attitude toward the Jewish question. The conquest of Austria by Hitler, and the pogroms against Jews in Germany, at the end of 1938, made him aware of his Jewishness. Never previously had Bauer written a line in a Jewish publication. But toward the end of 1938 he began to write a series of articles in the Palestine Labor Daily, "Davar", on the problems of the Jewish refugees. Those articles were permeated with a feeling of anxiety and grief of a wounded heart which was disappointed by the blasting of its dreams. Who knows whether he did not undergo the same tragedy as did Heine prior to his death--the tragedy of loneliness and alienness because of his estrangement from his people.

In this connection, let us turn to Max Beer 1), the Jewish historian of Socialism, who is known for his

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- 1) Max Beer, born in a small Galician town, absorbed the ancient Hebraic culture of the Yeshivot. Later he moved to Berlin where he joined the Socialist movement. He soon proceeded to London as correspondent of the "Vorwarts", organ of the Socialist democratic movement in Germany. Later, in the British capital, Beer learned all the ways and the subtleties of British politics and became an authority. Like others of his type, he was removed from Jewish life and affairs, devoting himself exclusively to Socialism. In London where he met Engels, the latter expressed his anxiety over the cultural and social position of the Jewish workers in Whitechapel and asked him to carry on educational work among them. This Beer declined.

social histories and who recently issued his "Fifty Years of International Socialism". This work reviews the failures of the socialist movement in our generation. Beers illustrated the various characteristics of the socialist parties in the principal European countries, and gives portraits of most of the outstanding personalities of this period.

In this book Beers clarifies the difference between the mentalities of the Jewish intelligentsia in Eastern Europe and Western Europe. In Eastern Europe, the Jewish intelligentsia placed itself primarily at the service of the revolution. Had Ferdinand Lassalle, Rosa Luxemburg, and Leon Trotsky been born and raised in England or France, they would have followed different careers. Had Lassalle been a London Jew, he would undoubtedly have been a Tory; in France, he would have been a Gambetta. Bismark had spoken of Lassalle as a man with great ambitions, possessing the qualities of a first rank statesman in Prussia; the only role open for him was that of a persecuted socialist agitator. Had Disraeli been not English but Prussian, he, too, would have had to go through the disappointments and frustrations of a Lassalle. Trotsky, had he been English, would have been a radical leader and journalist. Sir Herbert Samuel in Russia would have been a right-wing Menshevik, and an exile.

It is to the credit of these Western European types (especially in England) that they never showed a marked feeling of inferiority and never denied their Jewish descent; as a matter of fact, they were proud of their Jewish origin, and displayed this pride publicly. The theory that the greater the tolerance a Jew enjoys in a given country the sooner he will lose his separate national consciousness is not always valid. The British types, though more assimilated than the German, nevertheless supported Zionism. During the Weimar Republic some of the Jewish Socialists admitted their adherence to Judaism and supported Zionism.

## THE BUND

The course of the Jewish intelligentsia in Russia was entirely different. The frequent pogroms completely destroyed the illusion of effective assimilation. Hatred for the Czarist regime united all Russian Jewry, regardless of class. There was therefore a concentration--especially of the intelligentsia and the youth--around the revolutionary movement in which they hoped to find their liberation. What distinguished Russian Jewry from that in Western countries was that in Russia they lived in compact masses, clinging to Jewish traditions. The Yiddish language served as a barrier against rapid assimilation.

The social and economic composition of Russian Jews, too, was different from those of the West. Many of them were proletarians who lived in cities with large Jewish populations. They led an intensive Jewish life. The rapid expansion of Yiddish literature, which was also a stepping stone to the secular Western culture, heightened their consciousness still more. Under such conditions the Socialist movement found great support among the Jews. The Jewish worker in some larger cities knew not only how to organize but also how to combat physically the pogrom hooligans.

The motives that aroused the Jewish worker to his Socialist consciousness were as much national as social. He believed that with the fall of Czarism, and the triumph of Socialism he would gain liberation. In this war, the Jewish worker showed his heroism.

The economic-political instrument that the Jewish worker forged was the Bund, established in 1897. A part of the Jewish intelligentsia which kept its distance from the national movement found a wide field of work with the Bund. It waged a bitter war against Zionism, particularly against Socialist Zionism. Apart from genuine idealists in the ranks of the intelligentsia who put themselves at the service of the Bund in its everyday struggle, there were many who had no serious interest in the national endeavor of the movement. They were active in the Bund since existing conditions in Russia offered no opportunity for assimilation nor for extensive activity in the general Russian socialist movement. They availed themselves of the Bund as a platform for their social and political activities. Many of them had no genuine attachment to the Yiddish language but used it only as a means to approach the Jewish masses. Their demand for national autonomy was in reality more of a weapon to fight Zionism than a true desire to create a basis for the existence of the Jewish people as a national group in the future Russian socialist society.

There were Bundist leaders to whom the Bund served as the starting point to something more attractive, leading to the laurels of leadership in general Russian Socialist politics. A case in point is Axelrod, who in his younger days preached the creation of a separate organization for Jewish workers and later left the Jewish labor class in order to be active only in the Russian Socialist Labor Party.

In its war against Zionism, the Bund did not hesitate to join hands with the assimilationist bourgeoisie and the reactionary clerical orthodoxy. To this fact Borochoy gave adequate testimony in his excellent treatise "The Anti-Zionist Front". The Bund identified Zionism with the bourgeoisie. Borochoy called down the Bundist intelligentsia and its allies the self-styled heirs of the old Jewish Kehilla who "as the sole representatives of Jewry, or of their own class received the recognition of the corresponding group of the neighboring peoples. Without any original desire to serve the Jewish people, these leaders returned to the fold due to the failure of their personal careerist assimilationism." At the same time he pointed out that the Bundist intelligentsia did not greatly differ from the assimilationist intelligentsia which was unable to lose itself in the non-Jewish environment. All its activities were aimed at one thing: to win the recognition of the neighboring peoples, and to achieve personal integration in the Galut through the medium of the Jewish People... All those activities on the part of both the bourgeoisie and the proletarian intelligentsia were opportunist because they arose out of personal and transient rather than the national and fundamental needs.

## COMMUNIST ASSIMILATIONISTS

When the Bolsheviks came to power they recognized the principle of self-determination for all nationalities. The Jews, however, could not benefit by it because they were scattered throughout Russia. The right of the Jews to preserve and advance their culture was vaguely formulated both before and after the war. Even before the war the Bolshevik Party opposed the demands of the Bund for national autonomy. The Bolsheviks used the same argument against the national autonomy of the Jews as the socialists--assimilationists in the West. At this point they combated even the Bund.

Among the opponents of the Bund was Lenin. In October, 1913, Lenin sharply attacked the Bund because it dared to demand some petty rights for Jewish cultural autonomy in the future Russian Socialist state. Their demands included the right to establish Jewish schools. Lenin did not deny the right of every people to use its language and disseminate its culture. He emphasized that those rights must be granted because "of the necessity of conducting polemics in one's own language against the bourgeoisie." But Lenin opposed separate Jewish schools, since "only by fusing together the workers of all countries into one alliance can the working class become a force, offer resistance to capitalism and achieve a serious improvement in its life". Only the bourgeoisie is interested in separate Jewish schools so as to spread hatred among peoples. Starting from the premise "that international culture is not non-national", Lenin said that "in every national culture there are, even if undeveloped, the elements of a democratic and socialist culture, because in every nation there are toilers and exploited masses whose conditions of life inevitably give rise to a democratic and socialist ideology."

Lenin did not explain the nature and quality of that proletarian culture which he posits against the general bourgeois culture. "In every nation there is also a bourgeois culture, which moreover is present, not in the form of elements, but in the form of a dominant culture" and, therefore, "national culture generally is the culture of the landowners, priests, and bourgeoisie." In Lenin's eyes, the Bund betrayed the fundamental Marxist teaching since "in practice the Bundists have become like the bourgeoisie whose entire interests demand the spreading of faith in a non-class national culture." "He who defends the slogan of national culture has his place among the middle class nationalists, not among the Marxists", because "whoever directly or otherwise puts forward the slogan of Jewish national culture is the enemy of the proletariat,

the defender of the old caste element of Jewry, the tool of the Rabbis and of the bourgeoisie." Lenin asserted that those Jews who join the Russians, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, etc., in order to create an international culture are continuing thereby the sublime values of Judaism and combating the "national culture". This verdict of Lenin on the national cultural will of the Bund is ironic, since the Fourth Convention of the Bund had adopted a resolution declaring Zionism as a movement which aims to disrupt the development of class consciousness. In this resolution, the Bund had decided to exclude the Zionist workers from their political and economic organizations. Yet the Bund was accused by Lenin of national chauvinism!

Despite his adherence to the principle of internationalism, Lenin did not suggest the nullification of the great Russian culture nor the abolition of the primacy of the Russian language in the Soviet Union. Attacking the Bund for opposing assimilation, Lenin, however, expressed his opposition to compulsory assimilation, compulsion being a form of social inequality. He asked: "Does anything remain of inequality in the concept of assimilation after excluding any violence of any kind?" Why, he asks, should Socialism make a point of compulsory assimilation when capitalism is doing the job?

"There remains that universal historical tendency of capitalism to smash down national barriers, to erase national differences, to assimilate nations, which with each decade shows itself more powerfully and which constitutes one of the greatest motive forces transforming capitalism into socialism." Therefore, a Jew who adheres to his nationality disrupts this process of transformation of capitalism into socialism and he is no more than a "petty bourgeois nationalist". Lenin pointed to the assimilationism of the Western Jews, which seemed to him to be the most welcome solution, since to him, the Jews are not a nation but only a caste. If so, "assimilation can be denounced only by the Jewish reactionary petty bourgeoisie who wish to turn back the wheel of history and to force it to move,

not from the conditions of Russia and Galicia to the conditions of Paris and New York but in the opposite direction." Hence it is clear who has the right to be called a nation and treated as such: the governing nation. Whatever smells of being a national minority is reactionary and no more than an invention of the bourgeoisie for blunting the proletarian instinct!

Lenin's followers consistently realized the teaching of their prophet. Today, not only is Russian the ruling language in the Soviet Union, not only are the great social and revolutionary Russian poets of Czarist days the



national heroes of Soviet Russia, but in recent years even the despot Peter the Great is being glorified as the creator of the great Russian Empire. Thus have the Bolsheviks reconciled these inconsistencies. Jewish national culture is no more than an invention of the Jewish reactionaries, but the Russian national culture, which is delving for spiritual values into the past of dark Russian despotism, is pure human progress.

After the great Revolution, a special state department was to be set up by the Soviet government to deal with the Jewish questions. At the head of this department stood, of course, Jews who were descendants of the Bund and renegades of the Socialist Zionist movement. This department helped the Bolshevik regime to suppress the Zionist movement, carry on espionage activities in the Zionist-Socialist section and in the Hechalutz--now all branded reactionary. What could be a greater travesty of the ideal of Jewish minority rights!

Stalin once gave the following definition of the legal status of a nation in the Soviet Union: "The nation is the form, socialism is its content." To paraphrase it, the national constitution of Russia today is the most convenient form of the rule of Bolshevik bureaucracy over the various nations of that country. If this particular pattern of Russian socialism is not subject to further change--that is, if Stalinism is immutable--there is little hope for the Russian Jew to exercise an elementary liberty, to consider himself a brother of the American, Polish, or German Jew. Why should we be surprised that the three million Jews of Russia were unable to raise their voices against the Nazi barbaric treatment of Jews, that they are dumb when thousands of Jews are conveyed from Germany and Czechoslovakia to the new German-Russian boundaries!

This perhaps, explains the attitude of Russia toward refugees, and why it was only the democratic capitalist countries which felt it imperative to deal with this tragic problem. Whatever our opinion of the assimilationist Jews of the old school, it cannot be gainsaid that in case of distress they were always eager to offer unfortunate Jews moral and material support. In Soviet Russia the Jews are denied even that elementary privilege.

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The roster of the opponents could be continued. It includes a man like Karl Kautsky who sought the solution of the Jewish problem through assimilation. Even a man like Tolstoi regarded Zionism merely as a Jewish reaction against chauvinist nationalism.

Rousseau understood the problem of the Jewish existence much better than this coterie of Socialists. In his Emile\* he states:

"Those among us who have the opportunity of talking with Jews are a little better off. These unhappy people feel that they are in our power; the tyranny they have suffered makes them timid; they know that Christian charity thinks nothing of injustice and cruelty; will they have to run the risk of our outcry against blasphemy?....The more learned, the more enlightened they are, the more cautious. You may convert some poor wretch whom you have paid to slander his religion, you get some wretched old clothes-man to speak, and he says what you want; you may triumph over their ignorance and cowardice, while all the time their men of learning are laughing at your stupidity. But do you think you would get off so easily in any place where they knew they were safe? At the Sorbonne it is plain that the Messianic prophecies refer to Jesus Christ. Among the Rabbis of Amsterdam it is just as clear that they have nothing to do with him. I do not think I ever heard the argument of Jews as to why they should not have a free state, schools and universities, where they can speak and argue without danger. Then alone can we know what they have to say."

It was prophecy.

We have actually seen that as soon as Zionism showed the power of the Jewish people, once Jews took to living a normal national life in a country of their own, many opponents of Zionism underwent a conversion, healed by the new balm of Gilead.

When Zionist interests were threatened by British double dealing, even an assimilated Jew like Lord Melchett rose in the House of Lords in defense of Palestine. He spoke in words which fully identified him with Zionism and the Jewish cause, unafraid of being accused of dual loyalty. /

"I should say that our principal penalty has been our success; our success on the one side and the persecution in Germany on the other side. That has provoked the matter to a point where it is now decided that our effort is to be limited to an area which will certainly increase our difficulties enormously if it does not make it impossible for us to achieve anything."

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\* Page 269 Book 3 Translated by Barbara Foxley  
/ Discussion in the House of Lords on July 20, 1937

He spoke clearly in the first person. "Our!"

So spoke a Jew in a free country, permeated with democratic ideals. But he speaks only when he feels that his people has already achieved something in a country of its own. The prophecy of Rousseau came true.

Moses Hess was wiser than the advocates of assimilation, when he asserted that only under the rule of democratic socialism will the Jews be able to enjoy their full rights of national self-expression, since true socialism does not mean national uniformity within the confines of any country. The plurality of spiritual values and creative efforts are by no means out of order in an orderly and stable society.